

Text: Habakkuk 3:16-19, Title: Even If, Date/Place: The Road, 7/23/07, AM

- A. **Opening illustration: Our near miss at the Ichetucknee Springs blue hole yesterday, all the “if only”**
- B. Background to passage: We have heard the dialogue between the prophet and His Lord about the coming punishment upon Judah from the Babylonians, and also the impending punishment upon the Babylonians as well. And we have looked at the refrain of the song of Hab 3, which is intensely personal, then the verses as Habakkuk points the people to the awesome presence and reality of their Warrior God. This morning we will look at the bridge of the song. It is probably the most intensely personal set of lyrics in the entire song. They are a resolution to trust in God **even if** the favor of God, and His blessings cease. Most of the song is much like a hymn recalling the majesty and victory of God, but the bridge is very much like our modern choruses, being very personal, emotional, and passionate.
- C. Main thought: In the text, we will see three aspects to Habakkuk’s firm commitment to trust in God.

A. Fear and Faith Together (v. 16)

1. This first verse of the bridge demonstrates how that both faith and fear can coexist. Habakkuk describes his own reaction in very graphic terms when he realized God’s plan for Judah. His insides ached and pounded, lips quivered, body hurt all over, he was physically sick with fear. He quaked with fear, but his fear was not of the hardship to come, but of the Lord and His displeasure. And next he says “nevertheless,” I will wait patiently. Literally this word meant rest. It is the opposite of “trembling.” It carries overtones of victory, security, and confidence. Habakkuk says that **even if** calamity comes, his faith was firm. His fear of the Lord helped him maintain faith, because even in calamity, he did not want to displease God.
2. Ps 2:11, Job 2:10, Rom 12:12, Heb 12:10-11, 1 John 4:18,
3. **Illustration: Philip Crosby, in his book *March Till They Die*, tells of a forced march of American and European soldiers in Korea. In November of 1950, the North Koreans were being pushed north, and they were taking with them the Americans and Europeans they had captured as prisoners of war. It was a terrible march. They were forced to go sometimes twenty miles a day though they were emaciated, hungry, suffering. Soldiers who couldn’t keep up would fall back, and shots rang out. They had been executed. Philip Crosby and his friends, as they passed close to those GI’s who were having a hard time keeping up, would say slowly in a whisper, so as not to be heard, "God is near us in this dark hour. His love is real. His mercy is real. His forgiveness is real. His reward is waiting for us." Good," said Tighrope, “then you get in the wheelbarrow.” Now let’s suppose you did get in the wheelbarrow... speaking to families in the hospital that are confident in God’s moving and purpose during sickness,**
4. There will be times in our life of calamity, and fear will come upon us. Know that it is not necessarily sinful when we wince at pain, or when we our hearts feel faint at impending hardship. Jesus himself was anxious (but not sinfully so) before the cross. David was on many occasions. Paul relayed his feelings of abandonment, perplexity at circumstances, despair, and pain. But all, like Habakkuk, found their peace in the God of their salvation. We must resolve to rest patiently in the sovereign comfort, protection, goodness, and wisdom of our God. Camp out on some of these attributes. Develop a fear within you of disappointing God, which will override any fear of discomfort, pain, or inconvenience. **“How you respond in the wilderness will determine on which side of the Jordan River you die.”** Embrace the will of God for your life, **even if** it includes (go into a little depth on these hardships) happiness or depression, health **“He has chosen not to heal me, but to hold me. The more intense the pain, the closer His embrace.” — Joni Eareckson Tada, *A Place of Healing: Wrestling with the Mysteries of Suffering, Pain, and God’s Sovereignty*** or sickness, wealth or poverty, love or loneliness, etc. Learn to find your comfort in the fact that God is God, and He is large and in charge of all of life. “I am who I am, and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy.” Thank him for His silence, His discipline, His withholding, His delay, His hardship. This will help you with an attitude and mindset of restfulness in Him. And remember that this is not a “suck it up, buttercup” kind of instruction; it is an exhortation based on a gospel that says Jesus came to put on your pain and suffering, bear it, beat it, that you may have victory and peace during it.

B. Unshakable Joy (v. 17-18)

1. The prophet mentions signs of God's blessing, and says that **even if** they are gone; he will find his joy in God alone. The first word that Habakkuk uses in v 18 to describe this joy is one meaning to rejoice, to exult, to be jubilant. It describes a state and act of celebration, approval, and support for something. The second word indicates a very strong emotional attachment, affection, or joy. And the object of both of these words is in the Lord. This is a man who enjoys his relationship with God to the point that **even if** all else fails, his joy will still be full in God. Joy in God is not optional or peripheral; it is key! The highest, deepest, most enduring, most satisfying joy is found only in Christ. Not in His blessings, His protection, or any other gift or quality; just in Him. Having this joy is both a choice and an emotion. It is also a knowledge in the infinite worth and joy found in him. His value and worth in your mind and heart will determine your joy. To know him is to love him, and the deeper you know him, the fuller a treasure he becomes, relinquishing all blessings, and enduring all curses becomes worth it w/joy.
2. Ps 16:11, 43:4, John 16:33, 15:11, Phil 4:4, 1 Pet 1:8,
3. **Illustration:** I walked out to the hill just now. It is exalting, delicious. To stand embraced by the shadows of a friendly tree with the wind tugging at your coattail and the heavens hailing your heart, to gaze and glory and to give oneself again to God, what more could a man ask? Oh, the fullness, pleasure, sheer excitement of knowing God on earth. I care not if I never raise my voice again for Him, if only I may love Him, please Him. Mayhap, in mercy, He shall give me a host of children that I may lead through the vast star fields to explore His delicacies whose fingers' ends set them to burning. But if not, if only I may see Him, smell His garments, and smile into my Lover's eyes, ah, then, not stars, nor children, shall matter--only Himself. - Jim Elliot's diary, **I know not how God will dispose of me. I am always happy. All the world suffers; and I, who deserve the severest discipline, feel joys so continual and so great that I can scarce contain them, "Discipleship means joy."** –Bonhoeffer,
4. Think about your last huge disappointment or loss. Does your level of joy correlate to your circumstances, or to Christ? What if everything in your life was taken away—your family, your job, your possessions, your financial stability, your health? Would your joy in God be able to sustain you? If our country was to be invaded, or crops fail, economic crisis, natural disaster, would joy in God sustain you? Is your walk with Christ that deep? Could you celebrate God in worship if only you alone were left? Are you satisfied with His gifts or with Him? If not, seek him. Dive deeper into his character. The facets of God that we have yet to see will open up new doors for us as individuals to trust more deeply. Ask God for a hunger and grace to proceed in growth. In that plea, express total dependence on him and his work.

C. **A Doxology: Firm Praise (v. 19)**

1. Our prophet closes his song with a doxology. His is determined to have faith, joy, and praise upon His lips, **even if** the enemy is sieging Jerusalem, and God has removed His hand of protection for His people. Habakkuk calls him “the Sovereign Lord,” *Yahweh Adonai*. He will calmly trust in God and worship at His feet. **Even if** all these things happen, my joy in the Lord will transport me to higher ground. Again we see him clinging to the Lord as his only source of strength.
 2. Job 1:20, Ps 18:1-2, 27:1, 46:1, Isa 12:2, 2 Cor 12:9, Philip 4:13,
 3. **Illustration:** When Handel wrote the "Hallelujah Chorus," his health and his fortunes had reached the lowest possible ebb. His right side had become paralyzed, and all his money was gone. He was heavily in debt and threatened with imprisonment. He was tempted to give up the fight. The odds seemed entirely too great. And it was then he composed his greatest work--Messiah. *You Raise Me Up by Selah*, Louis Albert Banks tells of an elderly Christian man, a fine singer, who learned that he had cancer of the tongue and that surgery was required. In the hospital after everything was ready for the operation, the man said to the doctor, “Are you sure I will never sing again?” The surgeon found it difficult to answer his question. He simply shook his head no. The patient then asked if he could sit up for a moment. “I’ve had many good times singing the praises of God,” he said. “And now you tell me I can never sing again. I have one song that will be my last. It will be of gratitude and praise to God.” There in the doctor’s presence the man sang softly the words of Isaac Watts’ hymn, I’ll praise my Maker while I’ve Breath, And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler power; My days of praise shall ne’er be past, While life, and thought, and being last, Or immortality endures.” *The kids waking up on Sat nights...*
 4. Do not forsake worship in the valley. It is so easy to break the habit of regular worship. And the results are so devastating. You are cutting yourself off from the source of strength. From time before the Lord, from a weekly appointment to hear from God. This means both public and private. Sometimes we keep up appearances by continued church attendance, but our private worship before the Lord falls away. And it is OK to worship even when you don’t feel like it. We do this with other disciplines. And if we are faithful, the feelings will return. Begin by asking the Lord to change your feelings. Always stand firm in faith and praise the Lord for being God, the all-satisfying, sovereign, infinitely glorious King!
- A. Closing illustration: “God’s prophet had walked a precarious path. But lest we condemn Habakkuk too readily, we need to remember that the Lord did not do so; He merely corrected him. Ultimately Habakkuk’s implanted faith bore spiritual fruit. ... When times of doubt and discouragement come, as they inevitably do, the believer needs to come to God ... and share his concerns with Him. Like Habakkuk, he needs to come to God’s Word and get a fresh glimpse of who and what God is and so come to a place of renewed trust in the one who alone is truly God and therefore sufficient for all of life. May Habakkuk’s test of faith and triumphant joy in his saving Lord be an inspiration and example to all who must travel life’s road!—Patterson
- B. *I am brokenhearted beyond what I can express. But I am more committed than ever to trusting God, His promises, and His plans, whatever they are from here... “I would have lost heart, unless I had believed that I would see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.” That’s what the Psalmist wrote long ago (Psalm 27:13) and it beautifully reflects what I’m holding on to in the midst of the deep grief my children and I are now walking through. -Lysa Terkuerst regarding her separation/divorce in June 2017*
- C. Invitation to commitment

Additional Notes

- **Further app: we fight the joy of sin, not with law, or fear, or will, but with greater joy and pleasure in the person of God.**
- **Develop that joy by the expansion of your understanding and love for Christ—the disciplines**